



# *Pogsara Yia!*

(Girls First!)



FINDINGS FROM THE NAVRONGO HEALTH RESEARCH CENTRE  
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION ERADICATION INTERVENTION

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Navrongo Health Research Centre

## THE AUGUST GUESTS

Circumcisers are becoming increasingly rare to find. But the *Pogsara Yia!* team stumbled upon one recently. It took 1hr 52 mins to successfully split his mind into two... Share his perspectives on key issues in notes 8, 9, 10 & 11

### **How many women do you think your father must have circumcised throughout his career?**

I just can't tell. He may have done a lot before I was born and then when I was till young. But when I was grown and my father knew that I was opposed to circumcision, he did not do it openly or consistently. I am told he used to circumcise about 10-15 girls a day and he could do so for three consecutive days, especially with peer groups. He could also circumcise for twenty days or more between August and September every year.



Men would have to learn to resist the pressure from their wives to cut their daughters

### **Why are months of August and September designated the period for circumcision?**

Circumcision is usually done after the harvest of the early millet. There is then generally enough food to feed the neophytes. You know this period is preceded by the long lean season.

### **What is the average age for circumcision?**

Between 18 and 20 years. But it all really depends on certain physical features such as the development of breasts. But in recent times younger and younger girls have been circumcised because they developed breasts much earlier than in the olden days.

### **When a girl is cut how long does it take for the sore to heal?**

With my father, within one week the girl is able to walk about. Within one month the sore is healed.

### **Did your father have a family?**

He had five wives and many children. Eleven of them are alive

### **Did he have daughters and did he circumcise any of them?**

As a matter of fact he started with his own daughter, our senior most sister who died only a few years ago.

### **As a circumciser how did his clients view him?**

My father is known as a circumciser who perfected his profession and was known throughout the Kassena-Nankana country and beyond. People even traveled from Burkina Faso to have their daughters circumcised by my father.



**Akurugo Atami-duko's home at Sirigu-Busongo**

### **When was the peak of your father's career?**

By the time I was old enough to know what he was doing he may have already passed his peak. But I know he was active from 1976 to 1979.

### **How much does it pay to circumcise a girl?**

A basket of groundnuts, a calabash of sheabutter, millet, fowls etc. If a woman were pregnant at the time of circumcision she would pay a goat in addition but only after delivery. If a girl 'knows a man' already but she is not married, the price is higher.

### **Is there anything like a code of conduct for circumcisers?**

Yes, there is. First, before a girl is circumcised the soothsayer is consulted. If the soothsayer requests that

she should not be circumcised she will not be circumcised. Secondly, a circumciser will not proceed to circumcise a girl without the consent of her father. Perhaps it is because the father is the one who pays the price of circumcision. Since the circumciser also earns a living from his trade, he will not like to do it for free. The father should also normally follow the girl up to the house but remain at the back of it until the deed is done.

My father did not use to circumcise schoolgirls.

### **Could you not have stopped your father from going to jail if you wanted to?**

I tried but failed. The chief had summoned him a couple of times to caution him but to no avail. Everyone in the village knows I have been opposed to FGM ever since I was old enough to know the needless pain women bear. This is long before the law was passed. When I became an Assemblyman, I was the community level political representative for ensuring the people's welfare. Female circumcision was one of the main issues I launched a crusade against.

### **Did your crusade yield any fruitful results?**

Yes it did. When I became Assemblyman in 1979 my father stopped circumcision travelled down south. He always came back in my absence and cut a few girls and went back. So I always made it a point to be around in August and September every year. My father was not always happy about it because he claims all the women he should have circumcised and earned something for the family upkeep have gone somewhere else to circumcise. I became frustrated. I heaved a deep sigh of relief when the law was passed in 1994 criminalizing the practice of female circumcision.

### **Are you married?**

Yes I am. I used to have three wives but now I have only one. I had twelve children in all but only 10 are alive today. I have five boys and five girls. My eldest child, a boy, is 24 and is in Senior Secondary School.

### **How many more children to go?**

I plan to have no more children. Things are hard for me. I am also taking care of the rest of the family including my elder brother's children.

*Finish up story in **Pogsara Yia!** vol.1 no.11*

*Send questions or comments to: **Pogsara Yia!***

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